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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Lord of life, we praise and magnify Your Name. Forgive us when we give less and expect more. Teach our lawmakers to give to You their best, so that they may receive from You beyond their dreams. May they prepare for the decisions of this day by opening their minds to the inflow of Your Spirit. In all their getting, guide them to seek understanding. Make them fruitful, always reaping a harvest that glorifies You. Lord, give light to all who are in darkness, and lift us by Your mercy.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 11, 2010.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E.

GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following leader remarks, there will be a period of morning business for an hour, with Senators allowed to speak for 10 minutes each during that period of time. Following that morning business, we will resume consideration of the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization legislation. We have two amendments pending: the Sessions amendment and the Lieberman amendment. Votes are expected to occur throughout the day. Senators will be notified when any votes are scheduled.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, as Democratic leaders in Congress continue to insist that we are at some make-or-break moment in the health care debate, and that for some reason we need to pass a bill that raises taxes, raises premiums, and cuts Medicare, I would like to call attention to a notice we received just yesterday from the Congressional Budget Office informing us that they plan to issue a cost esti-

mate today for the Senate-passed health care bill.

In other words, sometime today the CBO will release its final cost estimate on the health spending bill the majority passed on Christmas Eve. This is March 11. We passed that bill on Christmas Eve. We are now getting a cost estimate from the Congressional Budget Office.

So our friends on the other side—every single one of them—voted for this enormous bill, a bill affecting the cost and quality of health care for every single man, woman, and child in America without knowing the full cost to the taxpayers.

Well, excuse me for noting the obvious, but this is no way to legislate on an issue of this importance. Month after month, we were told it was urgent to pass that bill—so urgent, apparently, that Democrats in Congress could not even wait to find out the effect the bill would have on the cost to the American people.

Now we are being told the same thing. Democratic leaders are telling their members they have to vote on this latest version of the same bill by Easter—the latest version of the same bill by Easter. When are we going to find out how much that one costs, Columbus Day?

Americans are not in any rush to pass this or any other 2,700-page bill that poses as reform but actually raises the cost of health care. Members of Congress should not be deceived by these theatrical attempts to create a sense of urgency about this legislation. The least that lawmakers can do is find out how much these bills will cost the taxpayers before they schedule a vote. They cannot have it both ways. They cannot say they are concerned about how much these bills cost and not even ask to see the pricetag.

The fact is, anybody who even considers voting for these health spending bills does not have lower costs as a priority because we know these bills are going to drive costs up, not down.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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